



# Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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## **State Vet recommends testing for equine disease in West Richland**

OLYMPIA – As a precautionary measure, State Veterinarian Dr. Bob Mead today recommended that horses in the West Richland area east of Bombing Range Rd. to the Yakima River be tested for equine infectious anemia. The area is bounded on the south at Lattin Rd. E., and on the north on a line through Paradise St. and the junction of Riverside Drive and Broadview. Testing of horses in the designated area will be done through the department without charge. Call (360) 902-1878 for information.

As an alternative, owners can pay to have their horses tested by private veterinarians.

Equine infectious anemia, commonly called swamp fever, is a viral disease that affects equines such as horses, mules, ponies and donkeys. It has no health affects on humans or other animals.

Horse flies or mosquitoes carry the virus, which attacks blood cells. These insects can carry the virus as far as 200 yards, from one equine to another. Symptoms vary from horse to horse and mimic other diseases, making a diagnosis difficult. Many horses show no symptoms. Others have one or more of several symptoms, including intermittent fever, swelling of the legs, rapid weight loss and fatigue. Once infected, horses become lifelong carriers. There is no known cure or vaccine.

Earlier this month, Mead ordered a quarantine of two horses that tested positive for the disease, along with two other horses from the same herd. The owner of the horses is considering the options available in dealing with the horses, including the possibility of quarantining them in an isolated area. The virus was detected in the horses during routine testing that is required by interstate law when horses are transported across state lines.

“We’re doing an investigation to determine movements of horses in and out of the area where the disease was found,” Mead said. About 7,000 to 8,000 horses are tested annually. Mead said about one every other year tests positive.

Equine infectious anemia is a reportable disease and confirmed positives are either euthanized, sent to slaughter, donated to a research facility or placed in a lifelong quarantine facility. Area veterinarians have been alerted to the rare disease. The Benton county Mosquito Control Program is also surveying for mosquitoes and conducting abatement in the area.

Fact sheets on the disease are available from the U.S. Department of Agriculture at [www.aphis.usda.gov/oa/pubs/fseia.pdf](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/oa/pubs/fseia.pdf) or the state Department of Agriculture at [www.wa.gov/agr/News/2002/attachments/Equine Infectious Anemia.pdf](http://www.wa.gov/agr/News/2002/attachments/Equine_Infectious_Anemia.pdf).

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